

CRYSTAL: Come in! (Enter Mary. She closes the door.) I beg your pardon?

MARY: I am—Mrs. Stephen Haines.

CRYSTAL: (Her poise is admirable.) Sorry—I don't think I know you!

MARY: Please don't pretend.

CRYSTAL: So Stephen finally told you?

MARY: No. I found out. (~~2nd Saleswoman half enters.~~)

~~CRYSTAL: Stay out of here! (Exit Saleswoman.)~~

MARY: I've known about you from the beginning.

CRYSTAL: Well, that is news.

MARY: I've kept still up to now—

CRYSTAL: Very smart of you.

MARY: But you've gone a little too far—You've been seeing my children. I won't have you touching my children!

CRYSTAL: For God's sake, don't get hysterical. What do I care about your children? I'm sick of hearing about them.

MARY: You won't have to hear about them anymore. When Stephen realizes how humiliating all this has been to me, he'll give you up instantly.

CRYSTAL: Says who? The dog in the manger?

MARY: That's all I have to say. (Turns to go.)

CRYSTAL: That's plenty. Maybe you'll find you've said too much. Stephen's not tired of me yet, Mrs. Haines.

MARY: (Contemptuous.) Stephen is just amusing himself with you.

CRYSTAL: And he's amusing himself plenty.

MARY: You're very hard.

CRYSTAL: I can be soft—on the right occasions. What do you expect me to do? Burst into tears and beg you to forgive me?

MARY: I found exactly what I expected.

CRYSTAL: That goes double!

MARY: (Turning to door.) You'll have to make other plans, Miss Allen.

CRYSTAL: (Going to her.) Listen, I'm taking my marching orders from Stephen.

MARY: Stephen doesn't love you.

CRYSTAL: He's doing the best he can in the circumstances.

MARY: He couldn't love a girl like you.

CRYSTAL: What do you think we've been doing for the past six months? Crossword puzzles? What have you got to kick about? You've got everything that matters. The name, the position, the money—

MARY: (Losing control of herself again.) Nothing matters to be but Stephen--!

CRYSTAL: Oh, can the sob-stuff, Mrs. Haines. You don't think this the first time Stephen's ever cheated? Listen, I'd break up your smug little roost if I could. I have just as much right as you have to sit in a tub of butter. But I don't stand a chance!

MARY: I'm glad you know it.

CRYSTAL: Well, don't think it's because he's *fond* of you—

MARY: *Fond?*

CRYSTAL: You're not what's stopping him—You're just an old habit with him. It's just those brats he's afraid of losing. If he weren't such a sentimental fool about those kids, he'd have walked out on *you* months ago.

MARY: (Fiercely.) That's not true!

CRYSTAL: Of, yes it is. I'm telling you a few plain truths you won't get from Stephen.

MARY: Stephen's always told me the truth--!

CRYSTAL: (Maliciously.) Well, look at the record. (A pause.) Listen, Stephen's satisfied with this arrangement. So don't force any issue, unless you want plenty of trouble.

MARY: You've made it impossible for me to do anything else—!

CRYSTAL: (Rather pleased.) Have I?

MARY: You haven't played fair--!

CRYSTAL: Where would any of us get if we played fair?

MARY: Where do you hope to get?

CRYSTAL: Right where you are, Mrs. Haines!

MARY: You're very confident.

CRYSTAL: The longer you stay in here, the more confident I get. Saint or no saint, Mrs. Haines, you are one hell of a stupid woman!

MARY: (Mary stares at her wide-eyed at the horrid thought that this may be the truth. She refuses to meet the challenge. She equivocates.) I probably am. I—(Suddenly ashamed that she has allowed herself to be put so pathetically on the defensive.) Oh, why am I standing here talking to you? This is something for Stephen and me to settle! (Exits.)